



National Commission on the Future of the Army

2530 Crystal Drive, Zachary Taylor Building, Suite 5000
Arlington, VA 22202

SUBJECT: National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) Staff Site Visit, 27 Sep 15, Fort Bliss, Texas, Minutes

Date: 27 September 2015

Locations: Fort Bliss, TX and White Sands, NM Training Areas

Format: NCFA staff discussion with commanders and staffs

Attendees:

MG (R) Raymond Carpenter, Executive Director
Mr. Anthony Boyda NCFA Staff
COL Kelly Peters, NCFA Staff
MAJ Ben Fernandes, NCFA Staff
BG Terrence McKenrick, Commander, Brigade Modernization Command (BMC)
BG Jeffery Broadwater, Deputy Commanding General Support, 1st Armored Division (AD)
LTC Kevin Beagle, Commander, Reconnaissance Squadron, 1st AD
COL Charles Masaracchia, Commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st AD
LTC Raphael Heflin, Commander, 142nd Combat Service Support Battalion, 1st AD
MAJ Romas Zimlicki, 82nd Airborne Division
CW3 John Millsap, Cyber Protection Brigade
CW3 Gregory Olivo, Network Operations Security Cell, BMC
CW2 Marcaus Hamby, Network Operations Security Cell, BMC

Documents Submitted to Commission: None.

Summary

The NCFA Staff participated in the Distinguished Visitor day for the Network Integration Evaluation/Army Warfighting Assessment (NIE/AWA). This AWA is the largest Army exercise for BMC in 2015 addressing 18 of the 20 Army Warfighting Challenges codified in Appendix B, The Army Operating Concept. The NCFA Staff arrived at the Deployment Center at the airfield at Ft. Bliss at 0730 hours for the NIE in brief. BG McKenrick briefed that the exercise included joint and coalition partners (14 partner nations) experimenting with potential technologies for future military operations. Fort Bliss/White Sands training areas provide a broad range of environments including subterranean, high altitude, urban, electronic warfare, and large unit maneuver areas.

The Army is addressing resources to adopt many of the 73 findings from the last event, NIE 15.2. The AWA was differentiated from past NIEs as AWA shifts the focus shifted from testing equipment in a program of record to experimenting, innovating, and training. The future annual cycle will include one NIE event and one AWA event. HQDA (ASAALT and G8) estimated past NIE events have provided \$6 billion in cost avoidance for the Army.

The NCFA Staff departed for the NIE Field Area at 0815 hours via helicopter. The 1st AD G3 served as escort officer for the NCFA Staff. He explained that AWAs could adjust to count as a

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Combat Training Center (CTC) rotation because the AWA provides similar feedback to Brigade and Division Commanders. In some ways, the AWA is a more robust exercise, though some adjustments might need to be made. NIEs could not count as a CTC rotation because the constraints do not permit sufficient training opportunities.

At the first stop, the Soldiers demonstrated an expeditionary battalion main command post (CP) shelter, which appeared too difficult to move for a reconnaissance squadron and had minimal added capability compared with the small tent behind the HMMWV that jumps within 30-40 minutes. The Battle Captain concluded that DRASH™ tents can be set up in a similar time, have fewer location constraints, and need only lift organic to the unit.

The NCFA Staff boarded the helicopter for the second stop where Mission Command on the Move (MCOTM) was demonstrated using MRAPs. The system appeared to allow greater flexibility to fight a brigade, but the MCOTM equipment cannot fit in an Abrams or Bradley. MCOTM appears to have made progress consolidating equipment and manpower to make the CPs faster and limit the need to pull Soldiers from formations to fill headquarters taskings. After the discussion, the NCFA Staff boarded the helicopter for the vicinity of the airborne exercise drop zone.

At the drop zone site there were a number of static displays with story boards and briefers. One of the displays was a surrogate Light Reconnaissance Vehicles (LRV) with a simulated 30mm cannon. The concern expressed by the leaders present was the need to limit units with reconnaissance mission to only have small arms weapons to encourage Soldiers to stay hidden. Having a 30mm weapon would tempt reconnaissance Soldiers to engage the enemy.

A second story board briefing addressed the airborne operations portion of the event. MAJ Zimlicki from the 82nd Airborne Division pointed out that airborne operations are far more effective with a small armed reconnaissance helicopter and a JLTV-like vehicle, which allowed offset airborne drops and the ability to avoid enemy Air Defense Artillery. Using small tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles provided important information to company and below units, but had less flexibility and cannot replace the firepower or speed of an armed reconnaissance helicopter. From a positive point of view, the information provided from tactical UAVs is manageable at lower levels because the UAVs generally stay in local area. Following MAJ Zimlicki's brief, the NCFA Staff observed a battalion level airborne insertion operation including a number of light surrogate vehicles and two OH58 helicopters being delivered by C17 air transport. Upon completion of the airborne event, the NCFA Staff boarded the helicopter for the sustainment brigade base camp.

At the Expeditionary Base Camp (EBC), the NCFA staff was briefed on remote force protection systems (TowerHawk, Containerized Weapon System, Persistent Surveillance System). The advantage of the combined systems was a reduction in manpower requirements from about 48 to 28 Soldiers for persistent operations. However, MG Williams indicated the improvements were enhancements, not replacements. Soldiers were not dedicated to the security mission and performed guard duties as an additional duty. Soldiers operating the system required one week of training and did not perform their normal duties during this exercise because no one else was trained. While tactic, technique, and procedure (TTP) refinements continue to be necessary, the system successfully detected and defeated several OPFOR attacks. A second equipment system being tested was a set of containerized buildings employed in lieu of Airbeam systems. The EBC's use of rigid buildings appears to have decreased fuel usage by almost half (400 gallons to 200 gallons) and, theoretically, the buildings last 15 years vice 3 years for Airbeam buildings. However, rigid buildings require four

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C-17s to move instead of one for the Airbeam set-up. After the tour and lunch, the NCFA Staff boarded the helicopter for the trip back to the Ft Bliss airfield.

Upon arrival at the airfield, the NCFA Staff had the opportunity to receive an orientation from the Royal Air Force crew members of the A-400, the newest airplane in the Royal Air Force inventory. The Royal Air Force explained the new A-400 was the European replacement for the C-130J. The A-400 has the projected ability to land in the same conditions as the C-130J, but fly farther, faster, and with greater cargo to include a Stryker, Paladin, Bradley, or Apache as cargo. The impact on rough landing strips and take-off/landing distances are theoretically the same as a C-130 if cargo weight is the same. The actual impact on runways and take-off/landing distances will be part of the operational testing for tactical conditions that is ongoing. The A-400's actual capabilities relative to the C-130 are yet to be fully tested.

The NCFA Staff moved by ground transportation to the 1st AD Tactical Operations Center where they were met by BG Jeff Broadwater, DCG for Support. He welcomed the NCFA Staff and provided a brief on the current situation. Of particular note was the complexity of the threat and myriad of options available to the Red Force in the exercise. The visit was relatively brief due to time constraints.

Upon completing the 1AD tour, the NCFA Staff moved by ground transportation to the Battle Simulation Center which housed the Communications/Cyber portion of the exercise. The NCFA Staff met with CW3 Millsap, CW3 Olivo and CW2 Hamby. This group explained that reliable communications and network operations have become the greatest concern for some commanders. A close second is the increasing electronic signatures created by new devices, which State actors, such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, can likely observe and potentially manipulate. DARPA is exploring low energy technology and other solutions. During the exercise, communications between coalition forces have gone well, due in part to the 4-6 week validation effort before this exercise to make sure communications worked well.

The NCFA Staff moved from the Blue force Cyber Center to an adjoining facility housing the Red force cyber element. Red force cyber mission was to disrupt and attack the communications and cyber network of the AWA friendly force. Unlike previous exercises, an AAR was being held between the Red and Blue Force Cyber Teams every three days vice one large AAR conducted at the end of the exercise. Both teams preferred the more frequent AARs as adding more to the learning process. Blue Force could profit from their mistakes and improve their performance throughout the exercise.

After visiting the Red Force cyber team, the NCFA staff returned to the Communications/Cyber Center for further discussions with CW3 Millsap, CW3 Olivo and CW2 Hamby. They pointed out that large electronic signatures and potentially weak cyber defenses may create vulnerability. According to one brigade commander "so long as I can communicate, no one can overmatch me...Limit my ability to communicate...I'm dead in the water." Cyber defenders receive certification from the school, which is an important first step, but insufficient overall. Cyber operators require regular training and exercising against a live-opponent because technology and TTPs change rapidly.

The necessary cyber defense tools are available for units at NIE, but units not participating may lack these tools and the trained operators needed to configure the tools to specific mission requirements. Regardless of the tools available, units need faster computers and ones that are regularly updated. The slower computer processing speed delays reporting of anomalies and

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problems to various tools for resolution. As one operator noted “our life exists in milliseconds” but there is “often a 5-10 minute delay in reporting.”

In addition to training, brigade units appear to need more defenders. The Cyber Center of Excellence is exploring reach-back cyber defenses. Defending cyberspace requires a defense in depth. Current training does not always test the entire spectrum. Two improvements to cyber training would be the development of a virtual cyber training range (limited ranges exist) and a “Cyber YouTube Channel” that is easily accessible to cyber Soldiers on a classified system. These would allow cyber Soldiers in all formations to collaborate and train together.

RC Soldiers with relevant civilian jobs pick up training faster and Regular Army Soldiers sometimes face training challenges due to taskings not related to cyber operations. Many commands have a limited understanding of how to use or train cyber Soldiers. Retaining skilled cyber Soldiers is an acute problem because “the Army needs them [cyber Soldiers] more than they need the Army.” The Army is challenge to compete with private industry on salary and should focus on good working conditions and taking care of Soldiers. In addition, the Army should consider longer terms of enlistment and proficiency pays.

The NCFA Staff moved by ground transportation to the hotel at 1620 hours to complete the day's activities.